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ABSTRACT

A project coordinated through Job Training Partnership Act programs and local educational organizations in Clermont and Warren Counties of Ohio attempted to identify persons in the clerical field who were unemployed or whose employment opportunities were limited by a lack of technological skills. A commercially developed assessment was used with personnel from local businesses and industries, and with clients of the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services (OBES). Through the OBES, 19 unemployed people were identified and tested. Although 12 businesses responded favorably initially, only a few allowed their employees to be tested. The assessment showed that most of the test takers lacked language and vocabulary skills and also lacked skills in clerical tasks that they did not typically perform. Two-thirds of those tested scored below the national norm on all of the clerical skills tests, demonstrating the need for more training. The study found that employers generally are employing fewer clerical employees, giving them more responsibilities, and providing little training. The study concluded that employers in general were not receptive to training programs during work hours, and employees were not willing to take programs after hours, possibly because they saw little possibility of advancement. A brochure tabulating test results was produced and disseminated to local businesses, and availability of training programs was announced. (KC)

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Final Report
for
Clermont-Warren
SDA #12

Clerical Displacement
Training Pilot

4-P9-ZT-CC-00

August, 1990

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FINAL REPORT FOR THE CLERICAL DISPLACEMENT TRAINING PILOT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

This project developed through a coordinated effort of local JTPA and educational organizations in Clermont and Warren Counties, a program to identify individuals in the clerical field who are unemployed or whose employment opportunities are limited by a lack of technological skills. A commercially developed assessment was used with personnel from local businesses and industries, and with clients of the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

One of the objectives was to develop a comprehensive clerical skills assessment package. Instead of developing a series of tests, we bought commercial tests from SRA/London House. Our instrument was a package of testing materials called Short Tests of Clerical Ability. The tests within that packet were: arithmetic, checking, filing, language, business vocabulary, and a word processor assessment battery. We assessed basic clerical skills, personal computer aptitude, academic skills and basic communication skills. We intended to test professional and personal development and career awareness. However, we were unable to find or create instruments for that purpose.

A second objective was to use these assessment tools to identify individuals with clerical skills or training who were unemployed or under-employed. We were able to identify 19 unemployed people through the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services. We were not, however, able to identify people who were, in the strictest sense of the word, under-employed. We found that there are very few companies who have discernable career tracks or career ladders from their clerical staff to other positions. There was one company who admitted that some of their "second tier" people (one step above

their clerical help) had come from their clerical ranks; but that was a coincidence as opposed to a career path.

The third objective was to document the assessment results and develop a professional brochure. Our results are included in the attached tables and graphs. We have also enclosed a copy of the brochure which was developed as part of this project.

The fourth objective was to develop recommendations for pilot training, delivery systems and locations for training. One of our recommendations is to develop a series of courses for clerical staff instead of individual courses such as keyboarding or information management taken haphazardly. The SWOT Team will assemble a clerical training program which will encompass training in many word processing and database management computer programs, along with other skills, such as filing, and the use of microfiche readers, copy and FAX machines, etc.

The fifth objective was to disseminate the program results. We are furnishing all the companies which participated in the project the blind results of their tests (no names, code numbers, etc.). We are telling them where their people ranked nationally on these norm-referenced tests. We are also distributing the statistics on the training needs in this report, and general conclusions are described in the brochure. We will provide people who participated in the administration of this project to speak or to discuss its results at any level with any agency. We will also distribute a short article to various publications of the Ohio Industrial Training Program, the Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission, Ohio Department of Human Services, OBES and local newspapers.

PROJECT PERSONNEL:

The project was directed by post-secondary administrators from the University of Cincinnati - Clermont College, Live Oaks Career Center, U.S. Grant Career Center and Warren County Career Center.

Jim West, Warren County Career Center, Jim Smith, U.S. Grant Career Center, Marie Absher, Great Oaks Career Center and Don Perry, University of Cincinnati-Clermont College, all have extensive experience in administration and development of adult programming. Jim West has seven years' experience as Adult Education Director at The Warren County Career Center and holds an undergraduate degree in Education and a Masters degree in Administration of Vocational Education. Jim Smith has five years' experience as Adult director, U.S. Grant Joint Vocational School, and holds an undergraduate degree in History-Sociology and a Masters in Educational Administration. Marie Absher has five years' experience as Adult Director at the Scarlet Oaks and Live Oaks campuses of the Great Oaks Vocational District. Donald Perry is currently an Assistant Dean at the University of Cincinnati-Clermont College, and holds an M.Ed in Occupational Education and a B.A. in History.

JTPA personnel involved with program direction were Sue Wettstein, Executive Director of the Employment and Training Center of Clermont County, and Dave Mason, Executive Director of the Warren County Employment and Training Office. Ms. Wettstein has worked in administration of JTPA/CETA programs for 12 years, and holds a BBA. Dave Mason has two years' experience as a JTPA administrator. Additional personnel administering the assessment instrument were selected by the project directors. The coordinators were Lois Luyster, U.S. Grant Career Center, Jan York, Live Oaks, and Chuck Miker, Warren County Career Center.

DOCUMENTATION OF ELIGIBILITY/LOCAL NEED:

The need for technical clerical training in Clermont/Warren counties is made clear by the educational institutions' response to the demand. It is also evidenced by local business and industry entry level job requirements in the areas of minimum typing abilities, computer aptitudes, and desire to find candidates with professional and organizational skills required of administrative support occupations.

The local OBES office is unable to supply statistics concerning people with clerical background who are unemployed; however, they recognize a strong demand for employment in the following areas: administrative assistant, administrative clerk, office management, computer operators and data entry operators.

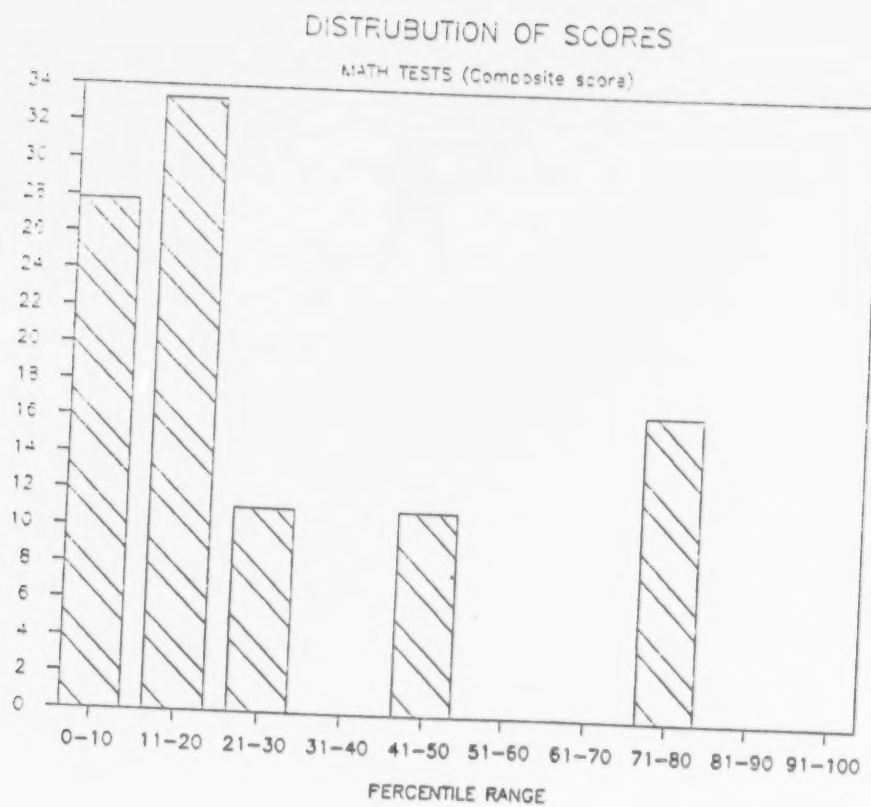
Specific needs are summarized below.

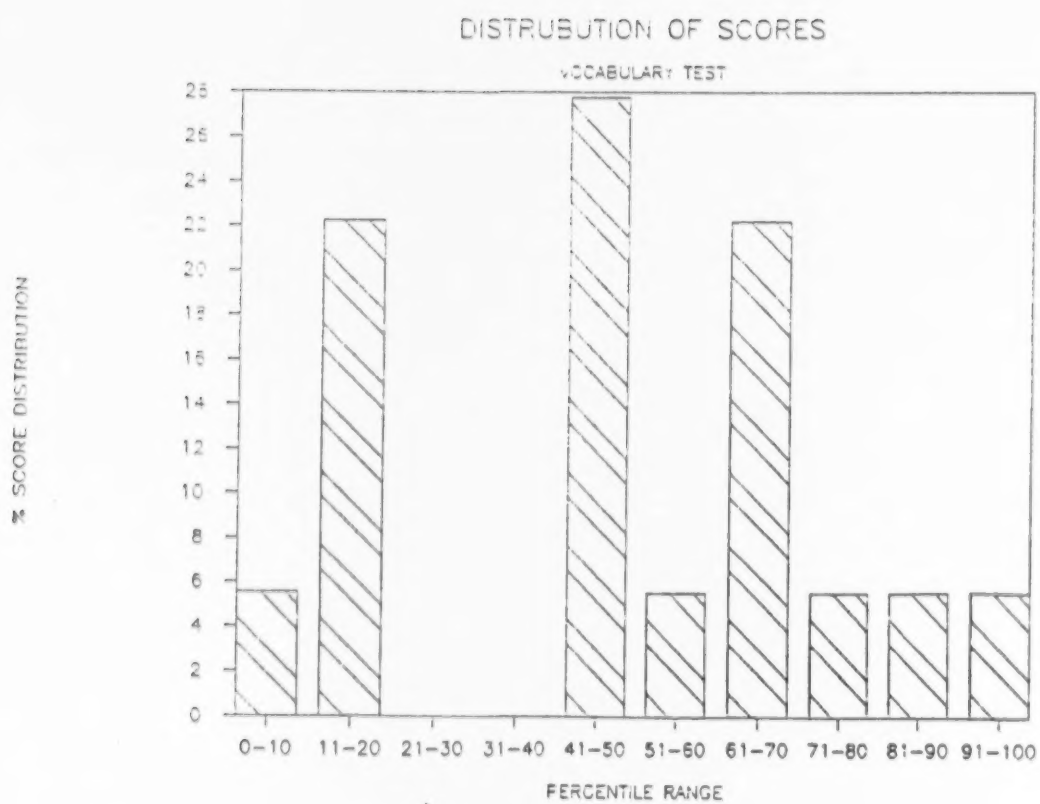
Most of the test takers lacked language and vocabulary skills. We found that the areas in which they scored the highest were the particular clerical tasks which they performed most frequently. Tests on tasks not regularly performed typically resulted in low scores. Our study indicated that, in Clermont and Warren Counties, of the groups that we tested, two-thirds of those tested scored below the national norm on all of the clerical skills tests, while one-third were at or above it. So the need for more clerical training in filing, checking, English vocabulary, and language and math skills was proven by the test results.

We also discovered a difficulty with employee training programs. Companies are typically employing fewer and fewer clerical staff with more and more responsibilities. They do all of the typing and spreadsheet work for the production, sales, personnel, and other departments. Instead of a score of secretaries, we now find three or four word processing operators who do all the work. And they have very little time for training.

Moreover, although training is needed, it would be difficult to start training programs for specific companies, because of the frustrations encountered with the aptitude tests. We received very cooperative replies from many companies in the areas of gathering and discussing data; but when it came to actually testing employees, we found many directors or clerical staffs too busy to spend four hours conducting these tests. They did not want to lose a half day's production. This also indicates that they would be unwilling to lose those people for any length of time (two or three hours a day for a period of time) to go through a training program. We also ascertained that the clerical staff themselves did not want to go to school at night, even if the training were free. They would not mind doing it during the day, but as long as no one was complaining about their job performance, they had no thoughts of going to school at night to upgrade their skills or make them better performers. This may be due, in part, to the perception of little or no upward mobility.

% SCORE DISTRIBUTION





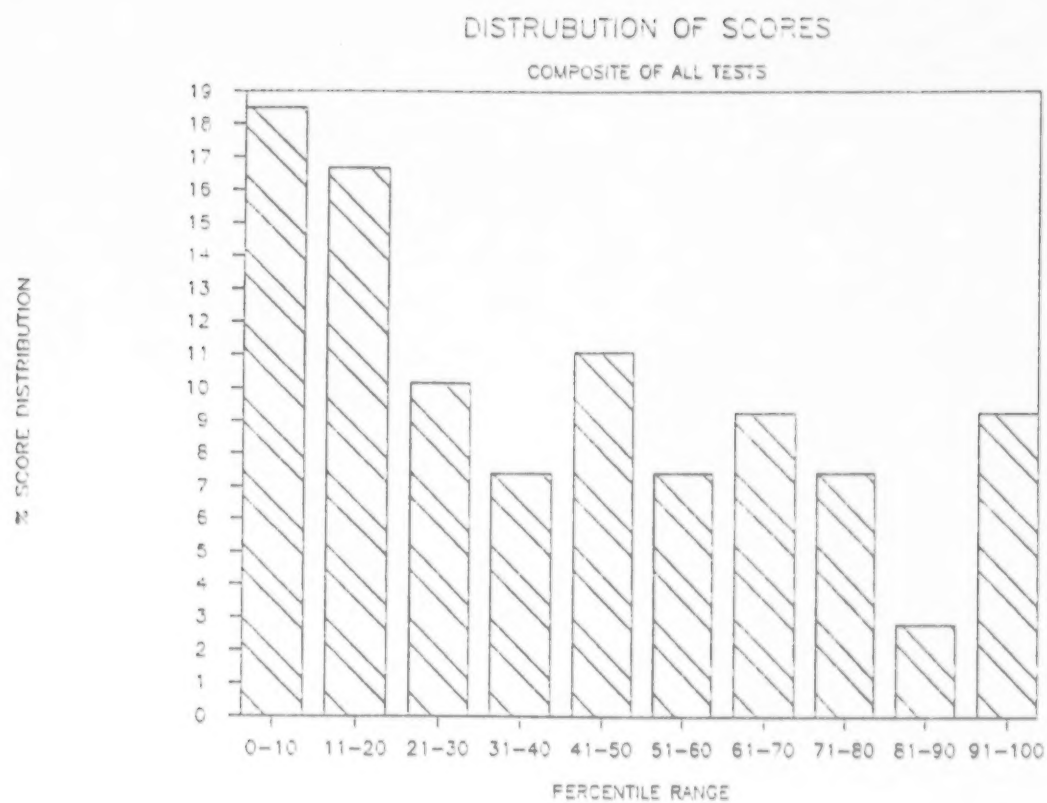


TABLE 23. MAJORITY NORMS
(employed)

Percentile	Arith- metic I	Arith- metic II	Arith- metic Total	Checking	Coding	Direc- tions	Filing	Language	Business Vocabulary
99	28	12	38	62	96	38	44	14	29
95	26	11	34	55	90	30	35	11	28
90	24	10	32	52	87	26	31	10	27
80	22	9	29	48	83	22	26	9	25
70	20	8	26	44	81	19	23	8	24
60	18	7	25	41	79	17	20	7	22
50	17	6	23	39	77	15	18	7	21
40	16	6	21	36	74	13	15	6	19
30	15	5	20	34	71	12	13	5	17
20	13	4	18	31	68	11	10	5	16
10	11	3	15	27	61	8	7	4	13
5	9	2	12	21	53	7	5	3	11
1	5	1	8	12	35	4	2	2	8
N	850	699	1038	1307	932	463	1049	712	1387
Mean	16.6	5.9	22.6	38.4	74.1	16.0	18.0	6.4	19.7
S.D.	5.0	2.5	6.5	10.3	12.1	7.3	9.2	2.5	5.1

TABLE 24. SECRETARIAL NORMS
(employed white personnel)

Percentile	Arith- metic I	Arith- metic II	Arith- metic Total	Checking	Cod- ing	Direc- tions	Filing	Language	Business Vocabulary
99	NOT AVAILABLE			63	NOT AVAIL ABLE	55	47	16	29
95				59		35	38	13	28
90				55		29	35	12	28
80				51		24	30	10	27
70				48		21	27	9	26
60				45		18	24	9	25
50				42		16	22	8	24
40				41		14	19	7	23
30				39		13	16	7	21
20				36		11	13	6	19
10				32		9	9	5	17
5				29		7	6	4	16
1				19		6	2	3	11
N				215		135	194	192	266
Mean				42.7		17.5	21.2	7.6	22.4
S.D.				9.4		8.6	9.7	2.5	4.2

ACTIVITIES AND TIME LINE

Initially we hired part-time coordinators for various institutions to help select employers, administer the assessments and manage the project. The coordinators constructed a survey to measure initial interest by local employers. This initial survey is Exhibit 1 in the Materials Developed Section.

The survey was mailed to over 100 businesses and industries in Warren and Clermont Counties. The survey asked questions about existing clerical positions: how many, if any were vacant and for how long; how positions were advertised (media); responses; and the testing done to determine applicant skills. We also asked for interest in a more in-depth interview about their clerical staff. From that survey we received 12 YES responses. During this activity, the coordinators developed a more detailed survey for the employers who chose to participate (Exhibit 2, Materials Developed Section).

The project directors and coordinators used the second survey to determine employer suitability for continuation of the project. We interviewed selected companies willing to continue their participation. We asked those companies if they would allow us to administer these clerical ability instruments. At the same time, we invited these participants to a general interest meeting, where we addressed the entire project. We discussed the scope of the project, the objectives, and what we perceived as the local need. We began to schedule appointments with businesses for testing.

At this point we experienced some difficulty. Some companies which had expressed an interest in letting us test their clerical staff decided at the last minute that they did not want to participate. In some instances it was because their staff was small, and they feared there would be some sort of competition or internal problem. In other cases--and this happened more than once--we found that the person with whom we originally coordinated either became ill or went

on vacation, or was put in charge of a more important project, and the substitutes were reluctant to continue the project due to unfamiliarity. In those cases, we decided to forgo their participation because of time constraints. There were other instances, however, when, upon being given all the information, companies decided that they did not want their organizations to participate in any sort of employee testing.

With those businesses and companies still available to us, we administered the short tests of clerical ability to the staff they had designated. The results were tabulated, and we began to finalize the data and to design the brochure. We are disseminating the results of the project to all the businesses which participated.

Time Line

	<u>FEB</u>	<u>MAR</u>	<u>APR</u>	<u>MAY</u>	<u>JUNE</u>
1. Assessment Developmental Team Meetings - Bi-Weekly	X	X	X	X	X
2. Business partner review meetings		X	X	X	
3. Development of Assessment Package	X	X	X		
4. Identification of unemployed participants		X	X	X	
5. Administration of assessment to co's & unemployed participants		X	X	X	
6. Promotional materials/brochure				X	X
7. Begin training				X	X
8. Evaluation/dissemination of project outcomes					X

MATERIALS DEVELOPED

The materials developed include:

The initial letter and short questionnaire which were sent to various Clermont and Warren County businesses (Exhibit 1).

The survey or interview instrument used to interview these businesses (Exhibit 2).

The brochure to be used in reporting and marketing (Exhibit 3).

The test package which we did not develop, but purchased (available upon request).

Exhibit 1

INFORMATION SHEET

1. How many clerical positions existed within your company in 1989?
2. How many openings did you need to fill within the last year?
3. How many positions were filled? _____

By what means?

Number of each

a) Classified advertising

b) Personnel agencies

c) In-house promotions

d) Local career center

e) Educational placement

f) Ohio Bureau of Employment Services

4. Did the new employees meet the requirements of the positions or was further training necessary?
5. Have you purchased new computer hardware or software in the past year?
6. Would you be willing to meet with one of our project coordinators in your office for a short interview?

Please return in the enclosed envelope by March 31, 1990.

Thank you.

Exhibit 2

CLERMONT/WARREN CLERICAL DISPLACEMENT PROGRAM
CLERICAL EVALUATION SURVEY

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Company Name _____ Date of Survey _____

Interviewee _____ Title _____

Total # of Employees _____ # of Clerical Employees _____*

of clerical openings (1989) _____*

of positions filled (1989) _____*

of positions eliminated (1989) _____

RECRUITMENT INFORMATION:

_____* Classified Advertising

Approximately how many responses did you receive for each advertisement? _____

What % of the applicants were interviewed? _____

Did you hire any of the applicants? ____ How many? ____

Were those interviewed qualified for the positions advertised? _____

How would you evaluate this form of recruiting? ____ (1-5)
(1 Unsatisfactory - 5 Very Effective)_____* Placement Agencies

Approximately how many positions did you attempt to fill through use of agencies? _____

Were these positions permanent _____
temporary _____
part-time _____
entry level _____
skilled _____

Were the agencies able to send applicants who met your specified requirements? _____

Approximately how many people were interviewed for each opening? _____

Were those interviewed qualified for the positions? _____

How many positions were filled through the use of agencies? _____

How would you evaluate this form of recruiting? ____ (1-5)
(1 unsatisfactory - 5 Very Effective)

* Data from preliminary mail survey

CLERICAL EVALUATION SURVEY (cont'd)

____ * In-house promotions

Approximately how many clerical positions were filled by promoting or training people within your company?

What kind of training was provided?

____ In-house training

____ Specialized training outside the company
Specify where: _____

How did you determine the eligibility of those considered for promotion?

____ Standardized testing
____ Temporary trial period
____ Performance evaluation of previous position
____ Other: _____

____ * Local career centers (Specify which ones)____ * Educational placement offices (Specify which ones)____ * Ohio Bureau of Employment Services

Approximately how many positions did you attempt to fill through use of the above services? _____

Were these positions permanent _____
temporary _____
part-time _____
entry-level _____
skilled _____

Were they able to send applicants who met your specified requirements? _____

Approximately how many people were interviewed for each opening? _____

Were those interviewed qualified for the positions?

How many positions were filled through the use of these services? _____

How would you evaluate this form of recruiting? ____ (1-5)
(1 Unsatisfactory - 5 Very Effective)

* Data from preliminary mail survey

COMPUTERIZED OFFICE APPLICATIONS:

____ * Purchased new computer hardware or software in the past year.

Describe your current use of computer equipment in the office:

What software are you currently using?

Do you expect to purchase new hardware or software in the next year? ____ (If yes, specify.)

How will you train employees for new software and hardware?

Will changes eliminate any current positions? (Specify.)

Will changes create any new positions? ____ If so, what are they and how will they be filled?

ASSESSMENT AND TRAINING:

How do you currently assess the skills of those interviewing for open positions within the company?

What specific skills and qualifications are important in your evaluations?

Dictation ____	Shorthand ____	Typing ____
Filing ____	Oral Comm. ____	Reading Comp. ____
Vocabulary ____	Spelling ____	Numer. Skills ____
Checking ____	Coding ____	Grammar ____
Word Proc. ____	Spread Sheet ____	Data Base ____
Programming ____		

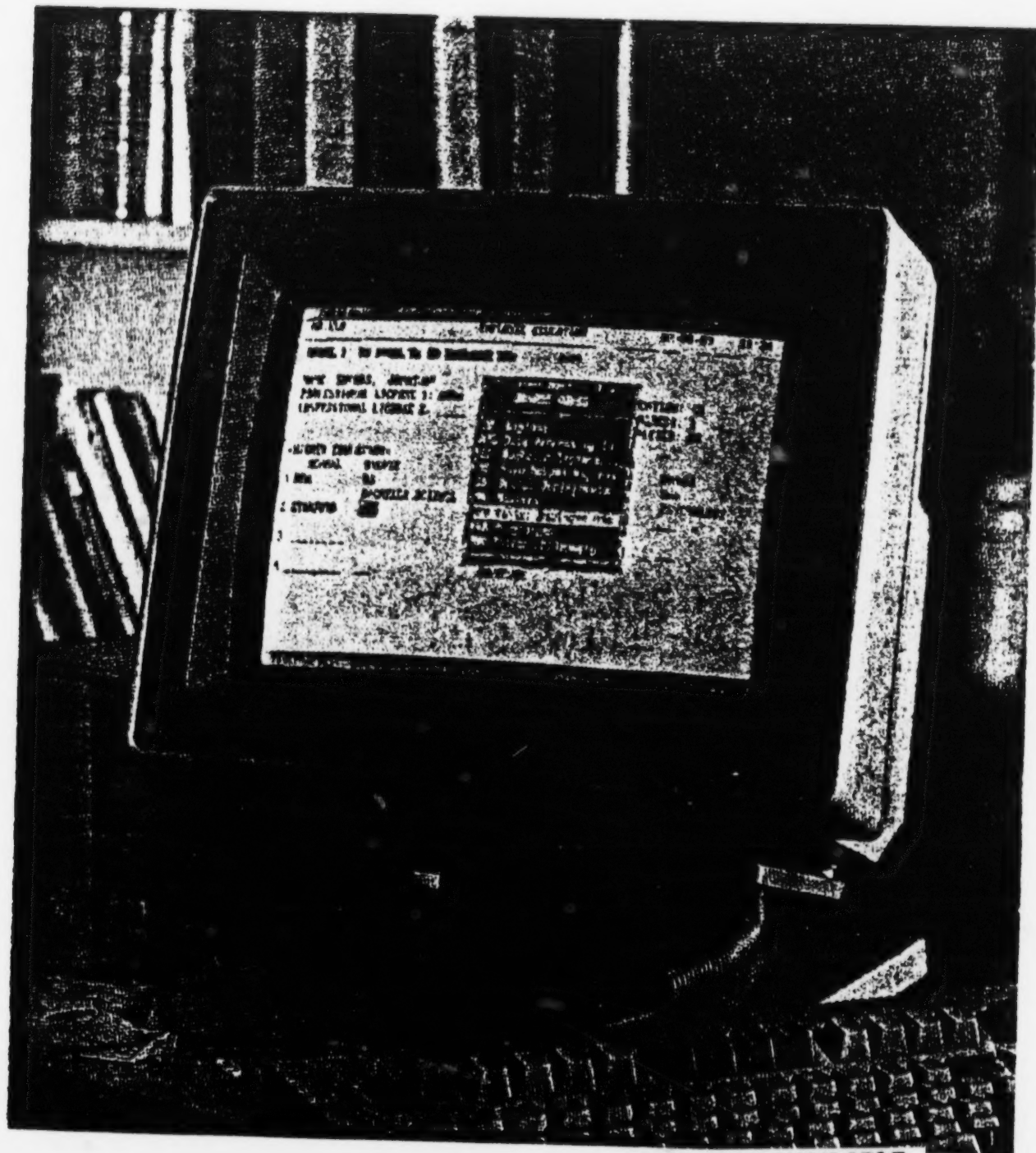
Are you aware of the clerical training opportunities available in your area? ____ What are they? Which have you used?

Would you be willing to participate as a pilot company in our clerical assessment study? ____

* Data from preliminary mail survey

Exhibit 3

Brochure goes here



REPORT DISSEMINATION:

Two thousand copies of the brochure will be sent to local businesses, industries and public service agencies which employ or help employ clerical staff. The information will be used to write articles which will be submitted to various publications of the Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission, the Ohio Industrial Training Program, various public service agencies, OBES and local newspapers. Each business that participated in the project will receive a copy of the report and a brochure. We are also prepared to speak to groups or individuals who desire personal contact.

EVALUATION PLAN:

The Evaluation Plan was to evaluate how we accomplished the objectives. We found that we developed surveys or bought assessment packages that were easy to administer, although they did take a lot of time. They were easy to score, but were not self-scoring. All the tests were nationally normed; they were from SRA/London House, and they came with a set of mean scores, the numbers of people tested to determine the norms, and a standard deviation.

The tests had the ability to measure applicable basic skills and aptitude for computer work. We did not conduct a physical typing or keyboarding measurement. That would have taken an inordinate amount of time, and it would have been difficult to administer as part of the package. We did, however, administer the computer/keyboarding aptitude tests.

We evaluated objective II, Identifying Individuals, by the fact that we administered the tests. The data basically indicated that two-thirds of those tested scored below the national norm in these abilities, and one-third scored at or above the norm. This was a particularly specific evaluation. That two-thirds of the scores were below the norm for people doing this kind of work surprised us all.

The evaluation of Objective 3 was measured by the preparation of a brochure which describes the training programs available, and the results of the assessment. That brochure is included with this report. It also has been approved by all the participating schools and the JTPA Agency.

Objective 4 will be evaluated by the ability of the proposed training to meet business productivity needs. Participating companies have told us that they want the results of the training and that they will use it to determine future job placements or future job activities for clerical staff.

We have also used the results to market technical and basic skills training which the participating institutions offer. We have not, however, entered into personal development or attitudinal training.

Objective 5 was to disseminate program results, and, again, we're doing that two ways: by sharing the results with the participating companies on a blind test results basis, and developing and distributing the brochure

PROJECT CONTINUATION AND/OR IMPLICATIONS:

Our project verified the need for training as both an entry requirement and a skill maintenance requirement for clerical staff.

The institutions of the Southwest Ohio Office Technology Team will continue to offer the Short Tests of Clerical Ability to those employers and individuals requesting them. This battery is a valuable diagnostic tool and should not be overlooked.

We will continue to work as a group to design courses and programs with continuity, multi-level entry and exit, and complementing objectives. We will also collaborate on specific custom training packages for businesses, eliminating competition and implementing shared resources. As a team we can offer exactly what is needed--when it is needed, where it is needed. And our service area knows it.

A major finding of our study was the unwillingness of many businesses to subject their employees to strict testing of ability. We were not prepared for the low numbers of participation. Although non-participation by a few was truly beyond anyone's control, we were disappointed. We anticipate, however, that the empirical test results will convince local businesses that it is time to treat the training of clerical staff more seriously.